

AN



ADDRESS

DELIVERED IN

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

DETROIT.

BY REV. WILLIAM E. McLAREN,

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SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 19th, 1868,

BEING THE

FIRST SABBATH AFTER HIS INSTALLATION AS PASTOR.

DETROIT:

THE DAILY POST PRINTING ESTABLISHMENT.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

DETROIT, January 20, 1868.

Rev. Wm. E. McLaren, Pastor of Westminster Church:

Dear Sir:—Having listened with interest, and, we trust, profit, to the sermon preached by you on the morning of the 19th inst., the first after your installation as our pastor, in which the mutual duties of pastor and people were set forth, we believe that it would be to the furtherance of the cause of Christ were it placed in a form in which we could study it more at our leisure, and, therefore, respectfully ask that you will furnish a copy for publication.

GEORGE DUNLAP,
JOHN T. LIGGETT,
D. WHITNEY, JR.,
ALLEN CHANEY,
JAS. O. FORREST,
W. P. KELLOGG,
D. MCCORMICK,
D. DEWITT NAY,
W. F. RAYNOLDS,
G. B. BOARDMAN,
E. P. SWIFT,
GEO. L. MALTZ.

HOVEY K. CLARKE,
JAMES JENKS,
JOHN FLANIGAN,
WM. LOCKWOOD,
WM. JENNISON,
SYLVESTER LARNED,
THOS. J. NOYES,
BENJAMIN B. NOYES,
GEO. H. PRENTIS.
A. Y. GRAY,
MARK FLANIGAN,
R. M. GRAY,

Hamilton E. Smith,
Theo. H. Hinchman,
Ford D. C. Hinchman,
Peter Voorhees,
R. C. Lloyd,
E. Willard Smith,
E. L. Porter,
J. N. Peabody,
James A. Hinchman,
Levi T. Griffin,
John Graves,
John S. Conant.

February 3d, 1868.

Gentlemen:—After some hesitation I have concluded to furnish you the manuscript of the remarks made on the 19th ultimo. They were not intended to wear the dignity of a sermon, but were presented as a familiar talk upon topics of mutual interest. As such, and with the prayer that my beloved parishioners may be profited in another consideration of the truths presented, I commit them to your hands.

Very sincerely your Pastor,

WILLIAM E. McLAREN.

ADDRESS.

Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of the happy flock which wanders through the fields of heaven, and drinks of the living streams that flow through the better land. It fills one with a strange, sweet longing, to think of the perfectness of their joy and the purity of their service.

But Jesus Christ is none the less the Shepherd of the flock which yet wanders over this wilderness of the world. The church on earth is a part of His one great flock. He loves it dearly. He has forbid the gates of hell lest they prevail against it, and He occupies with reference to it the most exalted and potential relation possible, God having put all things under His feet, and given Him to be head over all things unto the church, which is His body. There are different folds, but when He calls His sheep, they know their Shepherd's voice wherever they may be. They are all one in Christ.

The Church, then, is not a mere association of men having a common sympathy and purpose: not simply a confraternity of persons calling themselves christians. It is a divine organization; a corporation constituted and presided over by Jesus Christ. The Lord of Glory is its head. Hence there attaches to its affairs a character which does not inhere in any human organization. It is informed with a divine vitality. And when we discern the moving of the hand of Providence in its interest, when we observe how Christ (which is but another name for Providence) is choosing its way and directing its steps in the administration of His gubernatorial powers, it is our duty to render implicit obedience to His commands, and contemplate His orderings with peculiar reverence.

That wise hand has of late been busy among you who constitute this portion of the great flock. That hand, which doeth all things wisely, though the wisdom of the doing may now be past finding out, has bereaved you of the presence and service of one who loved you even as you loved him. He, whose right it is, has removed a watchman from the walls of Zion, and sends another that the city may be kept. The sentinels change; the vigil ceases not.

And now as I open my lips for the first time in the regular ministrations of the sanctuary as your formally installed pastor, officially invested with the care of your souls, I am conscious of a feeling of solemnity, deepening into an almost oppressive sense of responsibility. I stand here as your bishop and pastor to-day, not primarily because of your invitation and my acceptance, but as we believe because the Lord Jesus Christ hath directed me hither. This investiture of office and function is all His work, a fact which should be emphasized in our minds, a thought which should give tone and color to all our purposes and hopes, and which must intensify our sense of responsibility.

Addressing you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the steward of the grace of God for this particular portion of the household of faith, I may ask you to accompany me while I rehearse in a desultory way some of the views and feelings which have impressed my mind in entering upon this work.

With no assumed humility I declare to you that I experience in my inmost soul a sense of personal insufficiency for this work. When a man looks fairly at the dignity of the pastoral office, loftier in the eye of God than the proudest and most magnificent kingship of earth, involving interests that shall survive the dissolution of empires and the dust of thrones, reaching in its minutest duties towards another world, and terminating upon a limitless eternity: when one reflects that the pastor is one sent by divine commission as an ambassador of Christ to do in His stead the very work of beseeching men to be reconciled to God, which He would do were He personally present with us, there are supplied potent reasons why trembling and self-distrust should take hold on him who is chosen to this solemn office. this consideration must be added another, namely,

that the qualifications of the incumbent must correspond with the dignity of the office. If we consider simply the high standard of piety required, without reference to other lines of qualification, we shall discover motives for the exclamation, "Who is sufficient for these things?" For it is written, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

With a marvelous particularity God has addressed to almost every act and exigency of the pastoral life a special precept which has all the force of divine law, and he may well draw back distrustfully of self, whose work it is not only to "allure to brighter worlds," but to "lead the way;" and who must watch with a severe steadfastness, lest while he directs others to the path of safety,

"Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads, And recks not his own road."

The arduous labors of the office are almost as suggestive of insufficiency. I think one of the trials of the pastor's life lies in the fact, that while he is eminently a hard-working man, many persons regard him as a drone in society, a respectable idler, happy in receiving the maximum of pay for the minimum

of service. So far from this being even remotely true, it has been again and again demonstrated, that no other respectable profession or avocation requires the same absorbtion of mind, body and soul, and this is the testimony of clergymen who have had experience in mercantile pursuits, in medicine, or at the bar. I admit there is a way of doing, or rather of not doing, what the office demands, which gives it a sinecure character. A man may avoid duty, or he may slide over it. He may substitute the superficial preparation of a few hours, in place of that which consumes the best part of a week, in fitting himself for the Sabbath's duties. He may be content to repeat himself until his ideas and methods of presenting divine truth are worn so bare as to furnish very indifferent pasturage for the flock. may perform pastoral labor in a cold, perfunctory way, with no loving expenditure of sympathy and strength. But the pastor who proposes to himself an honest, faithful, continuous and prayerful performance of duty, confronts a work which in the very nature of it is the most arduous that can engage a man's time, talent and energy. In the direction of intellectual culture, he must strive to keep abreast of the time; he must acquaint himself with the current forms of free thought, so called; he must be informed in the polemics of the day; he must, in fine, be able and apt to teach eternal truth, whether it be presented in its ethical or doctrinal form, in

such a way that he shall be inflexibly loyal to the truth, and yet acceptable to tastes as various as the shapes of the snow crystals that are winging their way through this winter air. To these duties, requiring so much close and industrious application in the seclusion of the study, must be added the social obligation of the office. There is a great happiness in this work. It is its own compensation. It is also immensely fruitful of results. A pastor may preach Christ in the quiet of the home, at the bedside of the sick, in the hush of the household over which a great sorrow spreads its pall, as he cannot from the sanctuary. But to this blessed sort of work, so sweet yet so exhaustive to the sympathising heart, must be added an amount of purely social visitation very much greater than people mostly suspect. A proper consideration of this fact would prevent those complaints of neglect which wound the hearts of many faithful pastors, and sometimes cast a cold chill of estrangement over the church. In our large cities this sort of work is so expensive as to time, that it becomes a matter of grave inquiry whether much of it might not be done by others, that the teaching elder might give himself more exclusively to the word and doctrine. Additional to all this should be mentioned the ordinary temporal trials peculiar to the office. I am not disposed to put much emphasis on these. Trials are connected with every condition in life. The faithful pastor has

as few as any. His shady side is no darker than yours, and the same blessed promises which are yours are his. If any come to him that are peculiar because connected with his office, they are after all sunny sorrows. He is tossed and troubled because he is a shepherd. He must expect them, and expect to glory in them.

But the weightiest burden which the pastor must bear is the burden of souls. In taking upon himself the mantle of prophesy at God's call, he incurs a tremendous spiritual responsibility. The one ruling idea of his life is to

> "—watch for souls for whom the Lord Did heavenly bliss forego; For souls that must forever live In raptures or in woe."

And he must perform this work as one who must give account of his fidelity at the bar of God. "If thou give them not warning, their blood will I require at thy hands." This is the serious, solemn, soul-bending aspect of ministerial life. The purest moments of his joy in Christ are solemnized with anxieties and longings which he would not resist, but which none the less involve him as they did Paul, in "great heaviness and continual sorrow." Even in the abounding gratitude of his heart that the Divine Spirit has owned his labors, there are other objects of solicitude unreached as yet, over whom he must

exclaim in the Psalmist's words, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

But high and overpowering though these responsibilities are, it is the will and ordering of the Chief Shepherd that His servants discharge the sacred obligations He has imposed upon them. A sense of utter inadequacy furnishes no excuse from duty when the Master commands. It is His good pleasure that men should be saved by weak human instrumentality; that this treasure should be committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. The pastor, meeting and silencing all his doubts with the uttered command of Christ, stilling all his fears in the sweet promises of grace, and filled evermore with a deep longing for men that they may be saved, surveys the Red Sea of duty, labor, responsibility and trial, which lifts its turbulent waves full in his face, and yet resolves that he will go forward, knowing that the path of obedience is the path of safety and happiness. Nay more, he is stirred by a gracious impulsion to do with his might what his hand finds to do, exclaiming as holy Paul did, "necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel."

When the Head of the church has called a man to the ministry, and placed him over a particular church, what thing above all others should distinguish his ministry? What paramount and peculiar idea should characterize his labors? Simply this—

Fidelity to his commission. The conviction is thoroughly invoven into the texture of my soul that I have been sent here for but one purpose, and that is, the advancement of God's glory in the present and everlasting salvation of your souls through faith in Christ, that faith working by love, purifying the heart, and overcoming the world. If no inconsiderable acquaintance with the world and experience of its follies and its sins; if an intimate knowledge of what man is in almost every possible phase of spiritual experience or belief; if some observation of man as he appears upon the dying bed; if these can teach one anything, they have taught me, and the lesson is graven upon my soul as with chisel of steel, so ineffaceably that I could as easily doubt my own identity as doubt this truth, that there is nothing of any great importance in this world except that which constitutes earnest, honest, vigorous preparation for eternity; and the truth only takes on an intenser hue when seen upon the dark back ground of a race theoretically denying or practically ignoring it. Be well assured, therefore, my hearers, that the utterances of these lips will one continual burden bear; and that it is not merely out of deference to a custom which marks occasions of this sort, that I declare to you that I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.

The pastor of the present day is subjected to unusual temptations to descend from high apostolic

ground and drag the skirts of Jesus' gospel in the mire of secularity, and it behooves him to scrutinize with unusual care the terms of his commission. must preach Christ; not the humanitarian's Christ, nor the rationalist's Christ, but the Christ of the Bible. Not the gospel according to a party, or a leader, or a specialist in morals or politics; but the gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. "What shall I preach?" asked a young divine of an old christian. "Preach Christ!" was the reply. have preached Him already." "Why, then, preach Him again; preach Him always; preach Him only!" History has made it axiomatic that only such preaching accomplishes permanent results; and while it is true that the pulpit has its earth-side as well as its heavenly, while the preacher must not shut his eyes on the moving panorama of human history, the events of the time and the grand evolutions of the social world, he must at his peril look at them from the stand-point of Calvary, and interpret them in the language of Him who was Calvary's victim. "Christ must be the diamond in the bosom of every sermon." His example and His precept must afford the solution of every problem of duty. We cannot overstate the universal adaptability of the religion of Jesus to man in all his relations, experiences and necessities, and the pastor who is faithful to his commission exults in the conviction that in Christ there is a remedy for every evil, which He by His grace

and providence will apply through the steadfast preaching of His word. The pastor, therefore, forms the high resolve to stand by the Cross, to hold it up high over everything else. That is his commission; simply to preach Christ in the dignity of His person, in the glory of His character, in the condescension of His grace, in the wonder of His love, in the efficacy of His sufferings, in the prevalency of His intercession; that so men, lost men, may be saved.

And as to the manner of his preaching, he is not to read finished moral essays or starched literary compositions; not to delight the imagination or satisfy the acumen of the critic, or furnish strong meat for the proud logician; not to aspire after the ephemeral distinction of the modern pulpit sensationalist; but to draw his treasures from the unfailing fountain of God's holy word, and study that perfect model, the Great Preacher Himself.

By the help of God, the utterances of this pulpit shall ring blessed changes on that one word Christ; shall wander outward only along the line of the strong and symmetrical doctrines of grace as they radiate from their common centre. Here we shall proclaim nothing but the good old gospel, the dear old gospel of Jesus' blood, which even the nine-teenth century cannot improve upon, and which the nineteenth century needs more than any of those plausible novelties in religion with which it is sought to supplant the venerable and changeless truth of

God. "Christ and His Cross is all our theme," and according as men shall hear, or forbear, will the stream of their destiny flow towards, or away from, Paradise.

With regard to the relative duties of pastor and people there need be no diversity of view. The constitution of the church lays down the law in letters of gold. The pastor has rights; the flock has rights. They do not clash. The church of Christ is not a hierarchy. It was never intended that a privileged priesthood should reduce God's people to spiritual serfdom. But on the other hand, the church is not an abject democracy in which no spiritual authority shall be vested and authorized. There exists in it, by divine right and authorization, an order of men set apart for certain purposes. Christ has imposed vast responsibilities on them; they must, therefore, enjoy corresponding rights. Now, the rights of the two parties cannot come into conflict; they are coincident and compatible all the way through. In a church which is pleasing to the eye of its Head, there is a strict respect mutually paid to each other's rights; no encroachments, no unjust demands, no secret usurpations. It does not now seem necessary to particularize the prerogatives of the pastor and those of the people. But it may be remarked in general, that the church has a right to all the time, service, love, sympathy and devotion, of their pastor. He should be theirs in the Lord as

they should be his. His church should be his world. On the other hand, the pastor has a right to the respect, yes, to the reverence of his people. I speak not of the officer, but of his office. Raphael took a roll of canvass which was worthless in itself, and perhaps marred and defaced; he took it, and with his magical brush threw upon it tints of beauty which made it the admiration of the world. The pastor, a mere man, a weak, sinful man, is nevertheless the ambassador of the skies to men's souls. brings the message of eternal life. He holds up the Cross by which immortal men are rescued from an immortality of sorrow. It, therefore, becomes him who is invested with so holy an office, no matter how meanly he may think of himself, to insist that his office shall be magnified and secured in the enjoyment of its necessary prerogatives. And there is a special reason why this should be done, in the manifest tendency of many minds in this leveling age to deprive the ministerial office of its divinely ordained character, and degrade it to the rank of a mere human appointment. O, I counsel you to revere the sacred office! For when all humanly devised agencies shall have been annihilated, "when the finest paintings, the sublimest statues, the most durable monuments, the very pyramids themselves; when the so-called immortal works of philosophers. legislators, historians, poets, shall be consumed, and the earth and all that is therein shall be burned up,

the effects of a pastor's tears and studies, and visiting and praying and preaching, shall remain."

With this mutual recognition of rights there must be a mutual charity towards each other's faults. Your best endeavors and mine will be imperfect. There has been but one sinless minister on earth—not one perfect church. The pastor and people must not gauge each other by the angelic standard. We are all alike in our natural perversity, and do every day commit follies, mistakes and sins, which, if Christ is willing to cover them with His blood, we surely ought to be ready to cover with our charity.

And the fruit of charity will be confidence, affection, God's benediction! The ties which have been formed will grow strong and enduring; and time shall sanctify this relation into one of the most tender, absorbing and heartfelt of our lives. there is one thing nearer to my heart to-day than another, it is that we may cultivate a mutual affection. With deep gratitude to Him whom I serve, I feel that He has placed me over a people worthy of all the love of which I am capable, and already I begin to feel fastened to you and your families and little ones by bonds stronger than those of a formal installation. It is a noble thing to see a church of Jesus Christ exemplifying the new commandment in its relation to the ministry. It pleases God. It is a potent argument upon the world. It is a means

whereby men are brought to the Savior. It is a fruitful source of happiness now, and it will afford delightful themes for heavenly retrospection when we shall finally gather in the church of the skies.

Finally, my dear hearers, I would ask you to ponder deeply how all true success depends as much upon the people as upon the pastor. A devoted and acceptable minister is a very indispensable factor, I admit; but he will labor in vain, though he preach like an Apollos and live like a Paul, unless the great body of the church, in the development of grace, come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. If we were asked to mention an idea foreign to the spirit of the gospel, we could not find one more so than that too common notion of "getting a man who will build up the church." And churches so built up—history proves that God speedily blows them down.

No! The people have a work to do.

There is much praying work to be done. Some are qualified for this sort of service only, and may be these closet heroes, these unknown intercessors, are the mightiest workmen. It gave courage and joy to many a brave boy on the battle field to know that dear ones at home were praying for him. Thus the pastor experiences a sweet consolation in the thought that his work is remembered in many a closet, and his case presented at many a family circle.

But there are fields in the work of the Lord which the people must till and sow. Most of you are in the prime of life, that period when energy needs not the trumpet-call of an emergency to bring it into action. You are active in your secular spheres, as men must needs be in this nervous age. Now, God calls upon you to carry these endowments over into the spiritual, and expend a proportionate measure of your energies on Zion's walls. He bids you kindle the fires of apostolic zeal in your hearts, that so this church may shine with the beaconsplendors of a living, active christianity on all this city and the region round about. May He who has led you thus far on inspire you in the future with the spirit of the Master, whose meat and whose drink it was to do His Father's will!

I began these remarks with mention of the Name that is above every name. What has since been said has been personal to you and to me, and it seemed proper that these things should be said now.

But I do joyfully lead your minds back to Him who is Alpha and Omega. Let us ever dwell in rapture on Him that hath redeemed us. Let us solicit His permanent presence with us here. Let us request Him to bring, by sweet drawings of his love, the loved ones, who will be "loved and lost" if they are not so brought to the Saviour's feet.

Let us commit ourselves, pastor and people, to His wise and gracious control, that He may overshadow us with His love, that He may employ us for His glory, and that the church which He loved and gave Himself for may be sanctified and cleansed, that He may present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.





